

So I walk along this street (I'm sure it has
a name) I walk alone along this street
and watch a million individuals
fall from the sky and turn my jacket white.

MANIFESTO

I want a girlfriend.
I don't want a living arrangement domestic partner
significant other insignificant other male or female
lover
I want a sweetheart,
want someone to give me a scarf or necklace to hang from
my rear view mirror,
want whether we're doing it (or not) to echo in whispers
off locker room walls.
I want to take her to that Mexican stand in the parking
lot off Sixth Avenue
where the city has roped off the streets and ripped up
the sidewalks for reconstruction
for tacos de lengua burritos de tripa lemon wedges
radishes,
I want to watch a fallen streetlamp cast our shadow on a
billboard
and to know in my heart as her skirt moves with the breeze
we're not really that big.
I want to take her to the races and spend more on ice
cream than on the horses;
I want to handicap better than she does, but I want both
of us to be wrong,
and I want to bet
a little money
no more than I can afford,
but to make my wager exciting
I want to place it
all on one horse.

— David Sklar

Marquette MI

THREE ROOMS

On
Saturday
I drive to
the Denton Road
Liquor Store
for two forty-ounce
bottles of Budweiser.
On my way out, I drive

through the alley behind
the store.
There is a small
apartment building to one side
of the alley. I see a woman
open the door of her apartment,
lean out, and begin beating
a small pink bathroom rug against
the asbestos shingle wall of the
old and disrepaired
apartment building.
The woman is about 25,
dark-haired, and dressed
in a red bathrobe.
I drive slowly through the
alley because there are potholes
there filled with busted concrete
and water. I look at the woman,
and I can see around her,
inside the small one-room apartment
where a b/w television glows.
I suddenly remember
the three-room shack
where I had lived with
a half-crazy woman, and how
we had fought and fucked and drank
on two hundred dollars a month.
I remember how cramped
and ugly those three rooms were,
how we rubbed up against
each other and how
the friction and closeness
of the three rooms worked
on us like a disease.
Now it's nearly
two decades later
and I live in five rooms
with a woman who is not
half-crazy.
I remain poor,
though the problems
are mostly outside of us,
the problems come from
economics and the unbroken
burden of change.
I have learned about life
from the abrasion
of experience
and time. Five rooms
and a good woman make all
the difference in the world.
I drive past
the old apartment building,

turn on Denton Road,
and drive down
to Geddes.
I'm thirsty
and I want to
taste the
beer.

SHELIA'S FRIENDS

In
grade school,
Shelia had
imaginary friends.
She would talk
to them on the playground.
This is Horace the Horse,
she'd say, and this
is Bob the Bear.
I'd stand there
looking at nothing.
Shelia was nice,
she didn't make fun of me
because I was a slow reader,
so I would hang out
with her on the playground.
This is Sam the Snake,
and over there's Dave the Dragon.
Hello, I'd say to the air.
One day
two fifth graders came over
to where Shelia and I were talking
to her imaginary friends,
and the two fifth graders began
calling Shelia names, saying
she was crazy.
Shelia began to cry,
and then she ran back in the school.
I was left out there
with the two fifth graders.
What are you going to do?
they asked me,
but before I could do anything,
before I could turn and get away,
the larger of the two hit me
in the face. I put up my hands,
covered my face,
and tried very hard
not to cry.
If they saw you cry,
they never left you alone,